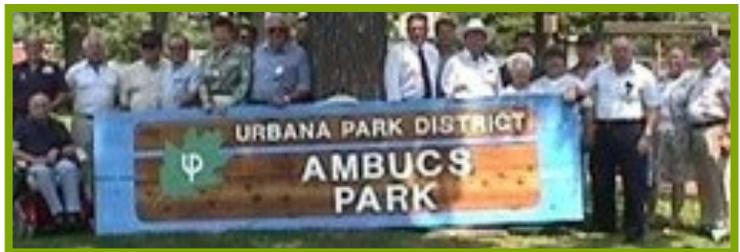


## Ron Meyer and AMBUCS Park

*Once upon a time* there was a park in East Urbana called Woodland Park. The park is owned by the Urbana-Champaign Sanitary District and is leased to the Urbana Park District. The park is 22 acres and started out with just a ball diamond and some trees. GCC AMBUCS started helping with the park on a small scale as a community project. Then came an AMBUC with an idea. Ron Meyer, who has been an AMBUC since 1983, was visiting Florida in the 1990s and saw a playground for children with disabilities. He knew Urbana needed a facility just like that. Ron thought a partnership with AMBUCS and the Park District might be the best thing for the playground project. He lobbied the other AMBUCS members and was met with resistance. This was not our primary mission. Ron also met with resistance from the Park District officials. They were worried that AMBUCS would start the handicap-accessible playground project and then leave things for the Park District to finish. Ron eventually won over the AMBUCS members and the Park District, and a partnership was formed. The first handicap-accessible playground was built in 1992 and carried a price tag of \$12,000. The AMBUCS members and the Park District added sidewalks for access to the equipment and the area was dedicated in 1993. The Park District now had one of the most unique playgrounds of the times.



The Chapter, with Ron in the lead, built the Jean Driscoll and the Nick Santi pavilions. Jean is an Olympic Gold Medalist and a 8-time winner of the wheelchair division of the Boston Marathon. Nick was an honorary AMBUCS member who ran a Spaghetti Dinner Fundraiser for many years at the Jolly Roger with all proceeds going to AMBUCS. Over the years, we've added and built a wheelchair-accessible wooden boat, a 75-foot wooden bridge, a wheelchair-accessible wooden train named the "Ron Meyer Express", and other fun items. AMBUCS donated \$20,000 to enhance the restrooms at the park and in 2000 the Park District gave AMBUCS their Community Service Award and re-named the park AMBUCS Park. (Dedication picture above)



As Ron's life situation changed, others in the chapter took up the project and we have recently replaced the original assessible playground with the latest design. It was dedicated in 2013 (new equipment at left). Continuing with the handicap-accessible theme of the park, the Tom Jones Challenger League plays wheelchair softball at the park and AMBUCS expanded the concrete pads in each of the dug-outs to accommodate the wheelchairs. In 2018 AMBUCS also arranged with a local roofing contractor, to replace the roofs on the Driscoll and Santi pavilions. In 2019, we plan on pouring a concrete pad in the handicap parking spot near the Driscoll and will add more trees to enhance the shade.

AMBUCS Park is now loved by people in the neighborhood and children with handicaps come from other towns to play just like everyone else. It's a beautiful park that is used almost year-round for all kinds of events and AMBUCS hosts an annual Scarecrow Festival in the park each September.

All of this because one man had a vision and wouldn't give up until his vision became real. ***Thank you, Ron Meyer!***



# Cash Bash

**March 2nd** was the date of one of our biggest fundraisers, the Cash Bash. All 275 tickets were sold by the week of the event so leader, Don Dunlap, was very happy. The event was very well attended with over 150 people there. We had 50/50 drawings throughout the night and card games where a deck of 52 cards were sold and the winning card drawn won the pot. New this year was a game called Heads and Tails. For a \$5 entry fee, each person could pick heads by putting their hands on their heads or tails by putting their hands on their butts. A coin was flipped and if it came up heads, the people who had their hands on their heads stayed in; if they chose tails they were out of the game. The games goes on until only one person is left standing and they win the pot. Everyone seemed to like the game so we'll be doing it again next year.

The big drawing started right after a great dinner catered by Neimergs. It took a while but we finally drew down to the last 5 ticket holders and brought them up on stage. The five winners could all agree to pool the prize money and split it equally or continue the drawing. In the first round, one winner decided to draw so one person was eliminated. In the second round, one winner again opted to draw and one more person was eliminated. In round 3, GCC member, Sally Denhart, was asked her choice and she opted to draw. As often happens, the next ticket drawn was hers and she left the stage with just \$300. Easy come, easy go! The remaining two winners learned from her mistake and both opted to split the remaining money. They walked away with \$4,000 each!

This was a successful fundraiser for our chapter and a fun evening for all who attended. Thanks to leader **Don Dunlap** and his committee for a great job, and thanks to all AMBUCS and friends who worked the day and made it all possible. A special thanks to our MC for the evening, **Keith Jamieson**, who braved pronouncing all of the names on the tickets.

A big thanks to the C-U Elks Lodge at Savoy for allowing us to host the event in their banquet room and to Neimergs for the great catering. And the biggest thanks goes to every one who bought tickets, played the card games, contributed to the 50/50, and played the Heads and Tails game. You all rock! Hope to see everyone next year!

## Calendar



Apr. 12-13—Spring Conference, Ottawa, IL

Apr. 27—Amtryke Road Rally

Jun. 17—Charity Golf Outing

Sept. 14—Scarecrow Festival

2020

Jan. 26—Barstool Golf



## disABILITY Expo

**March 30th** was the date for the disABILITY Expo at the Vineyard Church on north Lincoln in Urbana. The 12th Annual Expo, which ran from 9am-2pm, was attended by 108 vendors and groups like GCC AMBUCS. We have been a platinum sponsor for the last 10 years. The Expo includes resources for vocational challenges, residential challenges, recreation, self-help groups, service resources, advocacy and legal resources. There was some entertainment as well with local radio personality, Diane Ducey, as the MC. At noon, our chapter gave away three Amtrykes on the center stage; one each to Carter, Katy-Bug, and Dominic. The kids were all smiles when they took a short ride across the stage. Both Katy-Bug and Dominic ran to their Amtrykes as soon as their parents put them down. The stage was in the cafeteria area which brought extra people in to see our presentation and they loved it! We received several positive comments about the Amtrykes and our group after the presentation. We also talked to many people at our booth during the day and one woman came by just to say how much she and her family love AMBUCS Park. It was a great day even though the weather was terrible!

Thanks to all who made this happen: Earl Martin, Carle Therapist, who found three wonderful children who will benefit from their new Amtrykes; Larry and Elaine Windingland who ordered the Amtrykes so quickly; Scott Price, Amtryke Ambassador, who assembled the Amtrykes and got them to the church on time. And thanks to Bob Lacey for helping to staff the GCC booth. Great job, all! (l-r: Carter, Katy-Bug with her sister, Dominic with Earl Martin)



## Amtryke Trailer



**Ray Griest** has the Amtryke trailer and spent some time sprucing it up. First, he did some work on the trailer mechanics then he took all of the Amtrykes out and stored them in his shed. Sally Denhart helped by mopping the floor and rinsing the outside after Ray washed it. Ray then painted the floor and sides inside the trailer and Deb Griest and Sally put all the trikes back. It is now ready for the new season!

## Amtrykes

**Spring is here** and that means Amtryke requests are up again. We have seven here or on order and we presented three Amtrykes at the disABILITY Expo. These children are so happy to get a trike to ride and their therapists are happy to have a fun way for them to work on their physical issues. Scott Price delivered one this month and here's Addiana riding her new Amtryke. Fun, fun, fun! (photo by Scott Price)



## Amtryke Road Rally

**April 27th** is the Second Annual Amtryke Road Rally. The first one was a great success and we plan to make this year's even better! Leaders, Larry Windingland and Renae' Strawbridge, will need lots of help from the members to work each of the stations in the rally. But it's not really work to be at the stations, its fun! The children are smiling, laughing, and having fun just like all children should. Seeing the children have fun is one of the rewards of being an AMBUC and working on all the fundraising events. At least one therapist will be there to adjust the Amtrykes and assess if a larger one is needed. Larry and Renae' want to start decorating the C-U Elks Lodge at Savoy about 11am with the rally starting a 1pm. The fun will last until 4pm and there will be snacks and games at the tables for the other children and parents. The theme is super heroes so members are encouraged to dress up if they so choose. It's a great day for the kids to just have fun. Put it on your calendars!



## Ramps

**We still can't start building** but there is always something going on with ramps. This month we had three additional requests for a build and two metal ramp donations. The ramp donation mentioned last month was disassembled by Ray Griest, Keith Jamieson, Bob Lacey, and Sally Denhart. The crew then transported the ramp over to GCC AMBUCS member, Ron Meyer's house. Ron is having some health issues and could not get out of his house for doctor's appointments, etc. Ron was one of the initial ramp build leaders in the chapter so it was fitting that we could loan him a ramp when he needs it. We will disassemble the other metal ramp donation soon, store it, and reuse it as soon as we can. Also we hope to start building as soon as the weather cooperates.



## Summer Baseball Trip

**Don Dunlap** is organizing a trip to Cincinnati, OH, to watch the Reds play the Cubs. The date of the game is June 29th, 4:10pm. The tickets are \$88 and we will be sitting in the Riverboat sky box. The tickets include all food, soft drinks, and two beers. Don would be happy to add more people to the trip, just give him a call 217-202-3061. If you want to spend the night, Don has a block of rooms at the Millennium Hotel, Cincinnati. Call the hotel at 800-876-2100. Mention GCC AMBUCS and the rate will be \$105/night plus tax. Some people are staying both Friday and Saturday nights. Don is also organizing a special event for Friday night, an Axe throwing class. He says its lots of fun. Contact him if you are interested.



## Spring Roundup

**April is Spring Roundup** month. Our Chapter Big Hat President, Deb Griest, is running a contest for people bringing in new members. If you bring someone to lunch you get one point. If you bring in a new member, you get 3 points. The member with the most points will get 6 tickets for the National Big Hat Raffle where the top prize is worth \$2,400! Start asking your friends now!

## National Big Hat Raffle

**Deb Griest** our Chapter Big Hat President, will have tickets for the National Conference Big Hat Raffle soon. (She already sold her first batch.) The tickets are \$5 each or 6 for \$20. Three winning tickets will be drawn at the National Conference, Oct. 2-5, in Philadelphia, PA, but you do not have to be present to win. The first prize is a gift card basket worth over \$2,300! It also includes an acrylic Big Hat and an AMBUCS blanket. Second prize is an AMBUCS blanket and an acrylic Big Hat. Third prize is an AMBUCS blanket. (You can also buy an AMBUCS blanket for \$100.) Just contact Deb for tickets!

## Spring Regional Conference

**You can still register** for the Spring Regional Conference in Ottawa, IL, April 12-13. The registration fee is \$90 but the chapter will reimburse each member who attends. Just give Elaine Windingland a copy of your receipt for registration. Be sure to print your online form and mail it to Larry Turilli. You will also have to make your hotel registration separately. The block of rooms has closed but you can probably still get a room at the Ogelsby Best Western, 815-883-3535. There will be a golf outing on Friday and everyone is welcome. Just contact Larry Turilli: lgturil@yahoo.com

## Challenger League

**Spring also means** the start of the Tom Jones Challenger League season. The Challenger League is for children with handicaps to play softball just like other children. GCC AMBUCS member, Cris Vowels, is the liaison between us and the League and she reports that the push this year is to communicate, publicize, and recruit to get more children involved. They believe there are more children out there who could benefit from playing in the league if only they knew about it. The League had a booth at the disABILITY Expo and will be at the Autism walk on April 13th to get the word out.



The games are played in AMBUCS Park Tuesday evenings and Saturday mornings. Each player needs a “buddy” to play along beside them, to help them swing the bat, run down the bases, and field the hit balls. They often bring in groups like students and athletes to act as buddies. Our chapter sponsors a team and hopes to be involved as buddies at one of the games. At the end of the season each participant gets an award provided by our chapter. The awards will be given out by our chapter President or one of our officers on June 22nd and we hope to be the field buddies on that day. The alternate dates for being buddies are: May 11th and June 15th. At the end of the season, all the team members get to play in the All Star game at the University of Illinois’ Eichelberger Field. The full Challenger League schedule can be found at: <http://www.tomjonesleague.org/schedule>

## 2019-2020 Slate of Officers

**Our election of officers** will be **May 7th** at the lunch meeting. The slate is listed below but additional names can be added up until the week before the election and after that anyone can be a write-in candidate. If you would like to throw your hat in the ring for any office just talk with President **Ray Griest**.

President Elect: **Scott Price**

Treasurer: **Elaine Windingland**

Big Hat President: **Keith Jamieson**

Secretary: **Sally Denhart**

Sgt. At Arms: **Kyle Moe**

New Directors: **Bob Lacey, Steve Gibbs**

**Don Dunlap** will finish **Keith Jamieson's** second year as director and **Larry Windingland** will continue serving for his second year. **Renae' Strawbridge** will move to President. **Don Dunlap** will finish **Keith Jamieson's** second year as director. **Ray Griest** will move to Chairman of the Board.

Hope to see everyone at the election lunch!

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## Speaker: Earl Martin

**Carle therapist, Earl Martin** came to speak with us about a fundraising project he has started. He is working with Carle's Philanthropy group to raise funds for upgrades and additions to his equipment at the Pediatric Therapy Services at Carle. They are having a lip-syncing contest to raise money and Earl will be getting a group together for an act. All AMBUCS are welcome to participate as well. The date for the contest is April 13th.

His goal is \$50,000 and that includes updates to some of the Amtrykes. We wish Earl the best of luck! (Earl, right, with Keith Jamieson and Scott Price at the Road Rally last year.)



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## Tidbits

**Several AMBUCS** have been dealing with health issues this month and good thoughts are still needed for Arlie Saldeen, Bud Mesker, and Ron Meyer. Arlie is in Heartland and Bud is still in the hospital.

**We send** our deepest sympathy to **Rick and Mary Ohmit** on the loss of their son, Loren.

**Missed Tidbit from February** Our President-Elect, **Renae' Strawbridge**, was on the front page of the Local section of the News-Gazette on February 19th. She and AMBUCS friend, Marla Elmore attended an Illini game as guests of the Orange Krush.

**March Limerick:** There once was a lady named Ferris / Whom nothing could ever embarrass / Till the bath salts one day / In the tub where she lay / Turned out to be plaster of paris!

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## Splinters from the Board

**The Board of Directors** met at Giordano's on March 27. Action items were:



- => buy an Amtryke to be given away at the Regional Conference
- => asked Larry Windingland to order 300 of the new brochures
- => asked Larry to also order 100 thumb drives with our logo as speaker gifts
- => asked Ray Griest to purchase a new hammer drill for building ramps, cost \$250 or less
- => Larry was reminded that there is \$950 in the budget for the Road Rally
- => voted to donate \$500 to Earl Martin's Insync fundraiser

# Winning Chances

**3/5/19**—50/50: \$7 to Sally Denhart; Attendance: \$46 could have been won by Judy Dramsted but she was not present.

**3/12/19**—50/50: \$7 to Laura Gibbs. Attendance: \$60 could have been won by Kyle Moe but he was not present.

**3/19/19**—50/50: \$7 to Deb Griest; Attendance: \$75 was won by Don Dunlap!

**3/26/19**—50/50: \$9 to Sally Denhart; Attendance: \$15 could have been won by Laura Gibbs but she was not present.

